

Standing Rock Sioux Reservation becomes StormReady

On September 9, 2010 the Standing Rock Sioux tribe became only the 9th reservation in the United States to be recognized as StormReady. An official recognition ceremony was held at tribal headquarters in Ft. Yates, ND on November 16 with NWS officials from WFO Aberdeen and WFO Bismarck present. The Standing Rock Sioux Reservation encompasses all of Corson County, SD and Sioux County, ND and in terms of land mass, is the 4th largest reservation in the United States. Around 100 people were in attendance at the ceremony, including tribal elected leaders, emergency management, law enforcement and other emergency responders, SKYWARN spotters and reservation residents.

Dave Hintz, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the NWS office in Aberdeen, South Dakota; and John Paul Martin, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the NWS office in Bismarck, North Dakota collaborated on the effort to make the reservation Storm Ready.

“Working with Johnelle Leingang, tribal Emergency Manager, Vice-Chairman Mike Faith, and Chairman Charles Murphy, has truly been an honor,” said Hintz, when asked about working with the tribe. “Their sense of community and family is really evident when one looks at the steps they have taken to improve safety on the Standing Rock reservation.”

Using grant money, the tribe has been able to purchase backup generators for community centers for every town on the reservation. “This ensures that during times of power outages, residents have a local place to go and stay warm, instead of putting themselves in further danger by trying to drive to places where electrical power is still intact,” said Vice-Chair Faith. Additionally, the tribe obtained grant money to purchase every household on the reservation a NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio. “The emergency messages that come across on these radios will ensure that our residents are aware of potential hazards, and with ongoing education efforts, they will know what to do to protect themselves and their families” said Chairman Murphy.

Jeff Savadel, WFO Bismarck MIC said, “On July 13 Standing Rock had three waves of thunderstorms pass through, each producing baseball to softball size hail. The

communications with tribal officials before, during and after the event showed that they were indeed Storm Ready". Jim Scarlett, WFO Aberdeen MIC added, "Dave and John worked long and hard with Emergency Manager Johnelle Leingang and other tribal officials. Their efforts have bore fruit, and the people of Standing Rock are the ones who will benefit." Added Martin, "Dave and I increased our outreach efforts on the reservation with more visits to schools, more SKYWARN sessions, meetings with tribal officials, and attendance at hazard mitigation workshops. Our challenge now will be not only to maintain those partnerships, but to grow them."



Pictured from left to right:

Vice Chairman Mike Faith, Emergency Manager Johnelle Leingang, WFO Aberdeen MIC James Scarlett, Chairman Charles Murphy, WFO Bismarck WCM John Paul Martin, WFO Aberdeen WCM Dave Hintz, WFO Bismarck MIC Jeff Savadel.